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McHenry Terms Slaying A 'Stain on United States'

By BERNARD D. NOSSITER

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UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Sept. 12 — Donald F. McHenry, the chief United States delegate to the United Nations, today called the murder of a Cuban diplomat in Queens yesterday "a stain on the United States."

Commenting on the failure of law-enforcement agencies to root out Omega 7, the terrorist group claiming responsibility for the killing, Mr. McHenry told reporters: "We are dealing with a very tight group of fanatics and it is very difficult for the F.B.I. to crack that group because it is so small and such a tight unit."

While some United Nations diplomats expressed outrage over the killing yesterday of Feliz Garcia-Rodriguez, a driver who had been given the rank of attaché by the Cuban mission, others seemed resigned.

One of the most respected envoys, Tommy Koh of Singapore, said: "It will be very bad for the U.S. if they don't find the killer and bring him to justice. The U.S. Has received the active support of the whole world on their plea that Iran release the hostages and respect the time-honored code of diplomatic immunity. They cannot expect to do less than they expect others to do for them."

The British delegate, Sir Anthony Parsons, voiced the more common view. "This could have happened anywhere. We're not blaming anyone. We are extremely upset."

However, few senior diplomats identified themselves with Mr. Garcia, who was gunned down in his car in Queens. A South Asian envoy who asked that his name not be used, said: "I have talked to 100 people here today. Not one of them mentioned the killing until I asked. We are not Cubans and there is a certain antipathy towards them."

An Insulated Life

For the most part, senior diplomats at the United Nations live an insulated life, largely bound by Fifth Avenue and the East River, from 42d Street to 86th Street. They tend to move in chauffeur-driven limousines from luxury apartments owned by their Governments to offices, parties and dinners in the same grid.

On weekends, they are usually found in the Hamptons on Long Island or at country homes in Westchester or Connecticut. They are probably in far less peril than citizens who regularly ride the subways.

Lesser diplomats are scattered in less fashionable streets in Manhattan, Roosevelt Island and Queens. They are unlikely to become terrorist targets unless they are thought to be intelligence agents.

Several Arab diplomats, including one whose country is said to employ killer squads abroad, shrugged their shoulders and said the murder could happen anywhere. But a senior Latin American envoy called the killing "a danger to us all."

"It is like Iran," he said. "The immunity of diplomats is essential to international relations. No one is responsible. But how can we change the climate?"

Zehdi Labib Tarzi, the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which has claimed hundreds of terrorist killings in Israel and elsewhere, insisted that the United States must take the blame for the Cuban murder.

"The host country is primarily responsible," he said, "especially since it was informed several times by Cuba [of threats to the mission]. This speaks very poorly of the system that can't find people who plant bombs and things. I am impressed by the F.B.I.'s failure to find anything."

One of the leading South Asian diplomats, Shirley Amerasinghe of Sri Lanka, was equally bitter. "The expression of regret over the event is a poor substitute for the prevention of it. They [the police] had full warnings of it." Mr. Amerasinghe is currently president of the United Nations Law of the Sea conference and he formerly presided over the General Assembly.

Salim A. Salim of Tanzania, the Assembly's current president, called a unique open meeting of the 153-nation body so that envoys could publicly voice their indignation over the killing. The Cuban delegate, Raul Roa-Kouri, implied that the killers were products of the Central Intelligence Agency. The assassins, he said, "acted with impunity, with the treachery, expertise and security of those who were trained to commit all kinds of criminal acts against the Cuban revolution."

The Cuban delegate charged that Mr. Garcia "has died because his cowardly assassins were not punished for their previous crimes."

Speaking for the Soviet bloc, Boris Tsvetkov of Bulgaria called on the United States "to observe international law" and take steps to protect diplomats and their missions here.

In a separate statement, Kurt Waldheim, the United Nations Secretary General, "strongly condemned this wanton act of terrorism" and said he had urged Mr. McHenry to take "all necessary measures" to insure the safety of the